

# Yinyang and Daojia into Systems Thinking through Changes

**David Ing**

**Creative Systemic Research Platform Institute**  
(Ticino, Switzerland; Mora d'Ebre, Spain; Espoo, Finland)

**Systems Changes Learning Circle**  
(Toronto, Canada)

**EQ Lab, Dialogic Drinks**  
**April 30 + May 2/3, 2024**

Image CC-BY Mike Cassano (2009) *Most Interesting Pothole*



David Ing, 2024

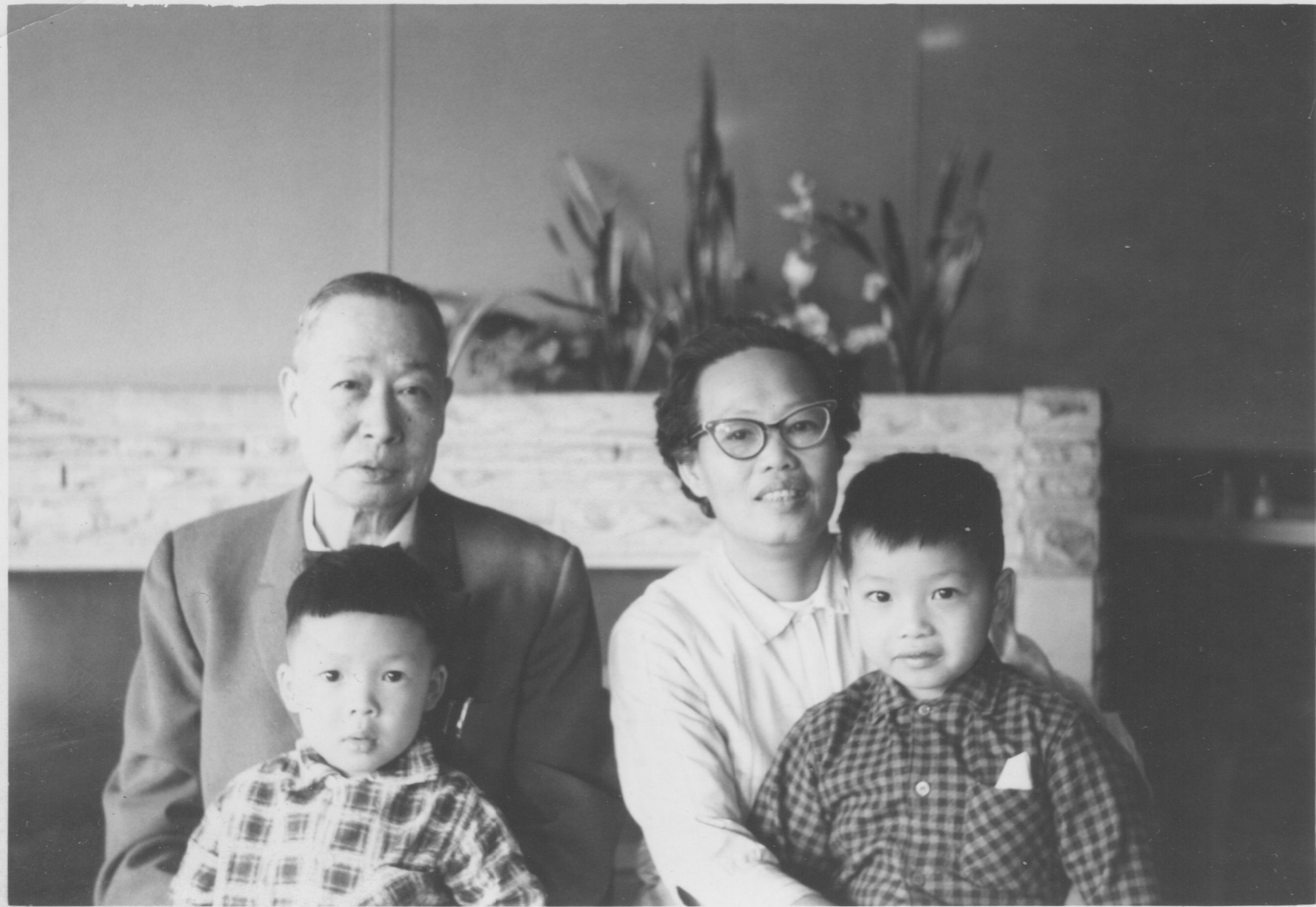


# Agenda

A. Welcome	Introduction	:05
	Ice-breaker	:05
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E. After Hours		:30

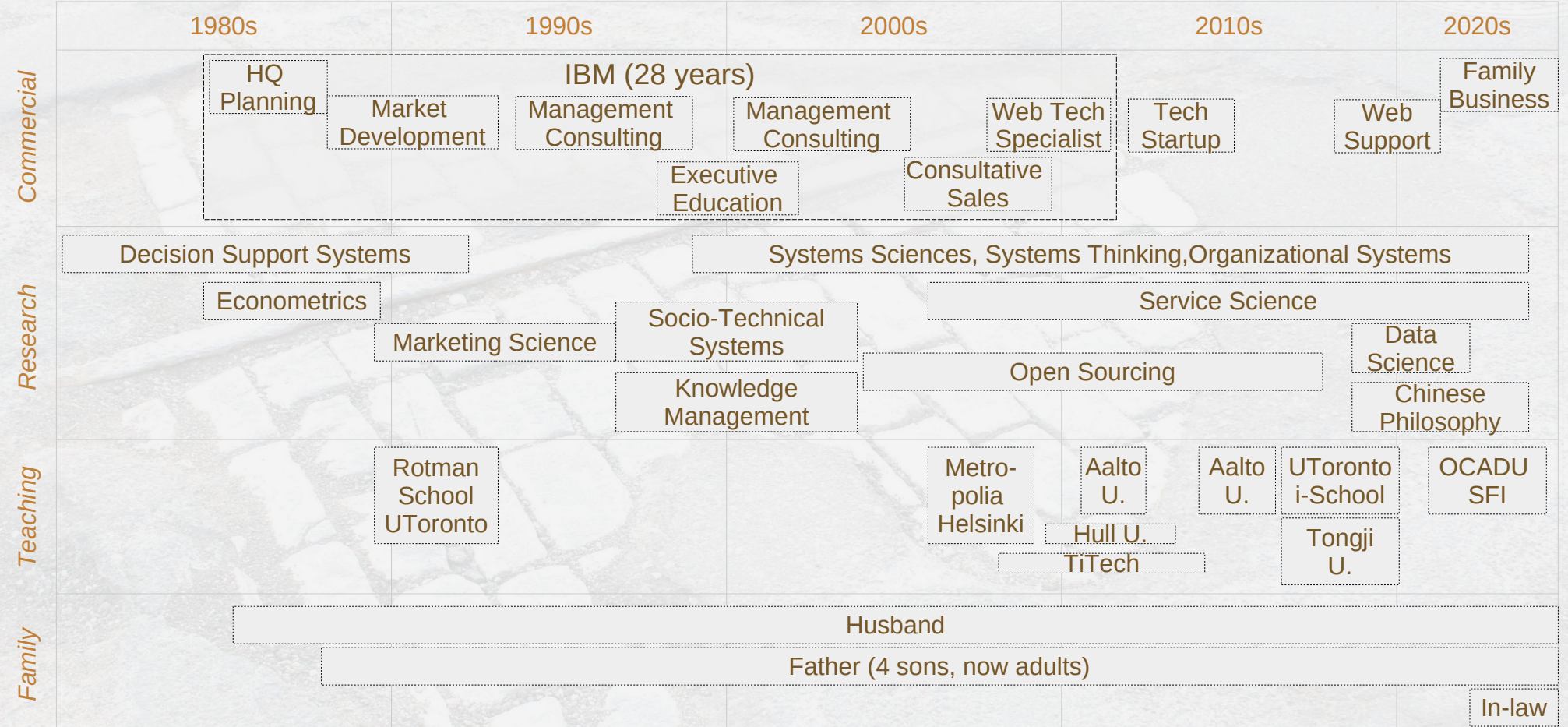


Circa 1964,  
Gravenhurst, Ontario, Canada





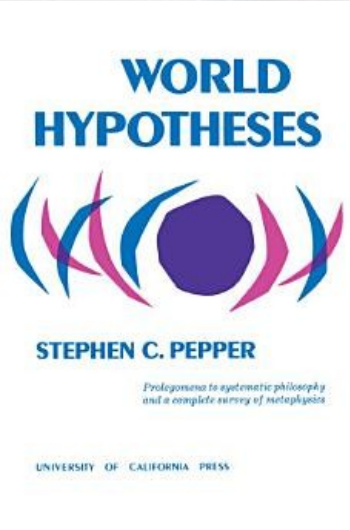
# David Ing resides in Toronto, Canada (with 1M+ air miles)





A. Welcome ...

# Four world theories (world hypotheses) by Stephen C. Pepper in 1942 now have an additional proposed based on *yinyang*

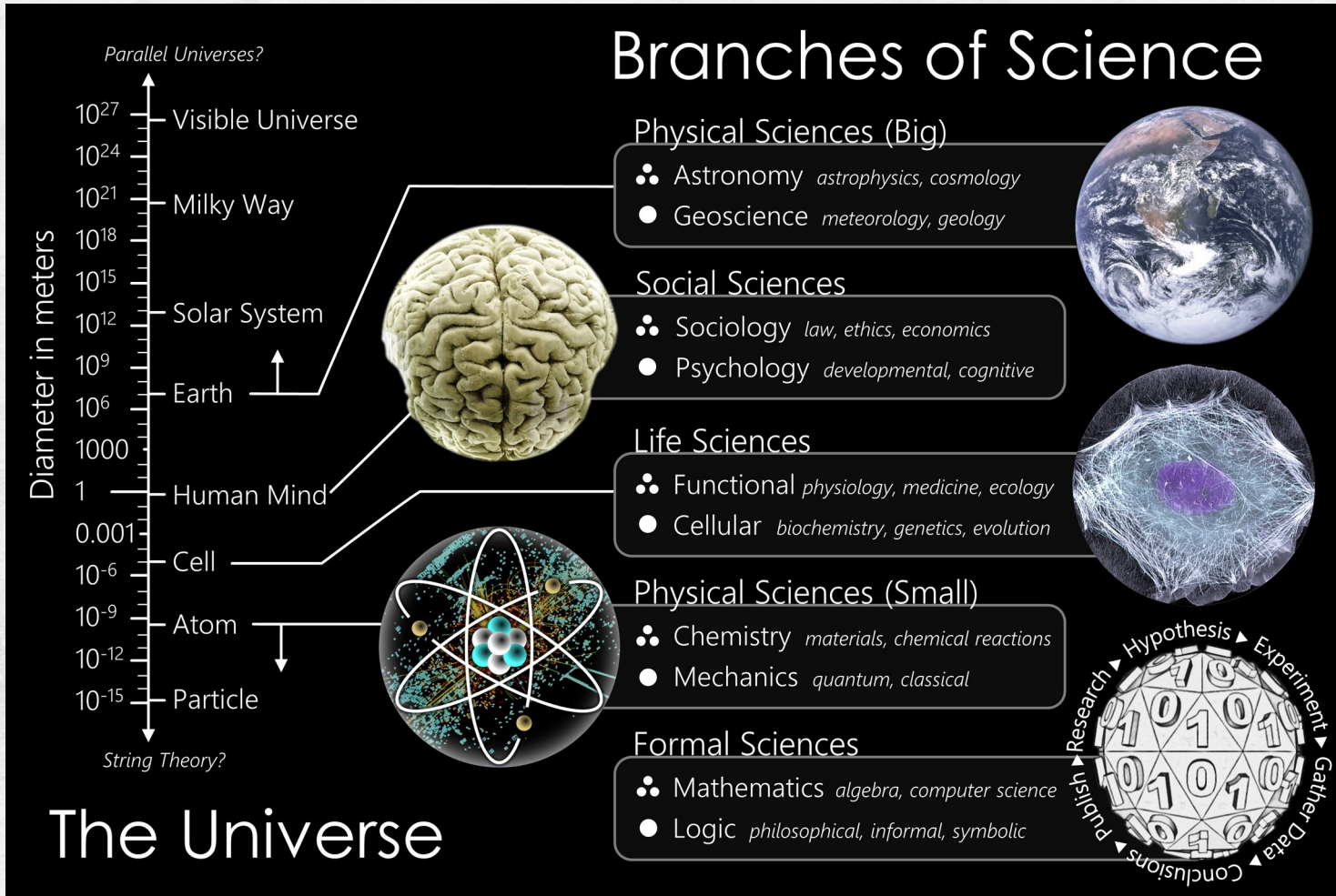


<i>World Hypothesis</i>	<b>Dispersive</b> manner for organizing evidence	<b>Integrative</b> manner for organizing evidence
<b>Analytic</b> mode of reasoning	<b>Formism</b> <i>Root metaphor: Similarity</i> , as recurrence or recognizable features <i>Nature of time:</i> Universal or irrelevant	<b>Mechanism</b> <i>Root metaphor: Machine</i> , where exerting force or energy produces predictable outcomes <i>Nature of time:</i> Schematic time as location (linear and dimensional)
<b>Synthetic</b> mode of reasoning	<b>Contextualism:</b> <i>Root metaphor: Situation</i> , as a historic event in its living actuality <i>Nature of time:</i> Qualitative duration, event relative to a specious present	<b>Organicism</b> <i>Root metaphor: Constructive Development</i> , with orderliness of changes from stage to stage <i>Nature of time:</i> Directional arrow, successive integrations
<b>Synthetic</b> mode of reasoning	<b>(Con)texturalism-Dyadicism:</b> <i>Root metaphor: Tidescape-windscape</i> , as living rhythms irregularly line up in diachrony <i>Nature of time:</i> Kairotic, with propitious periods and inopportune periods	

Ing, David, and Susu Nousala. 2024. "Rethinking Work, with the Pandemic Disruption: Metatheorizing with World Hypotheses and Systems Changes." *International Journal of Organizational Theory and Behavior*, forthcoming.



# Which sciences have most shaped your experience?



The Scientific Universe,  
CC-BY-SA Eric Fisk (2023),  
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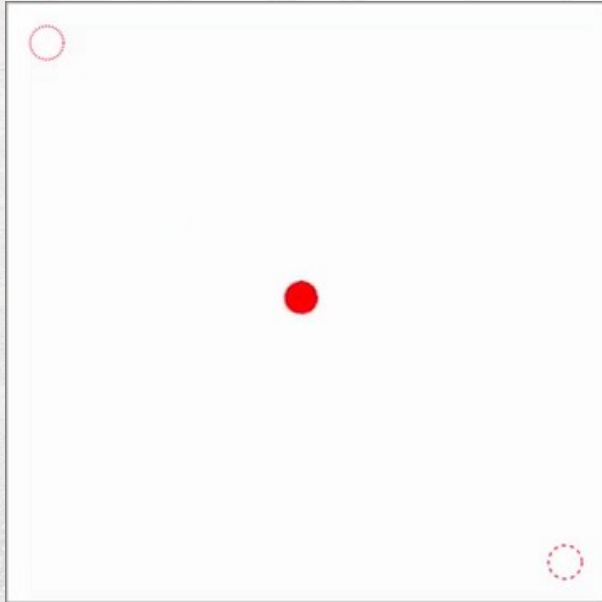


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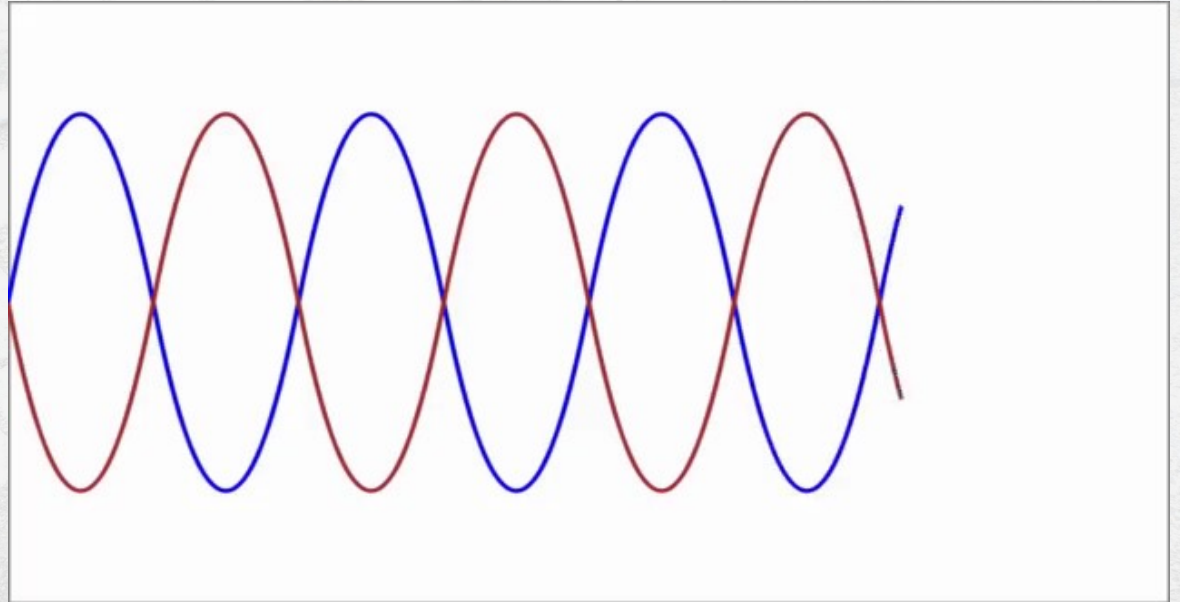
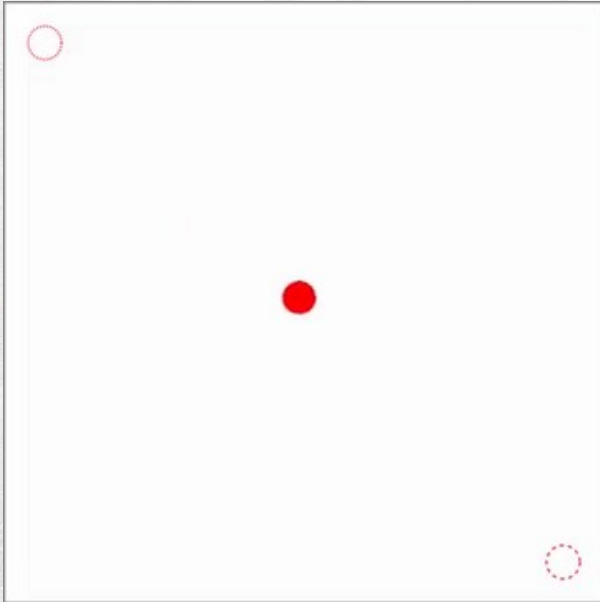
# Ancient Greeks → Western science on straight lining (point-to-point);



Square red dot straight line CC-BY-NC-SA David Ing 2024)



Ancient Greeks → Western science on straight lining (point-to-point);  
Classical Chinese → science as yinyang rhythmic complements

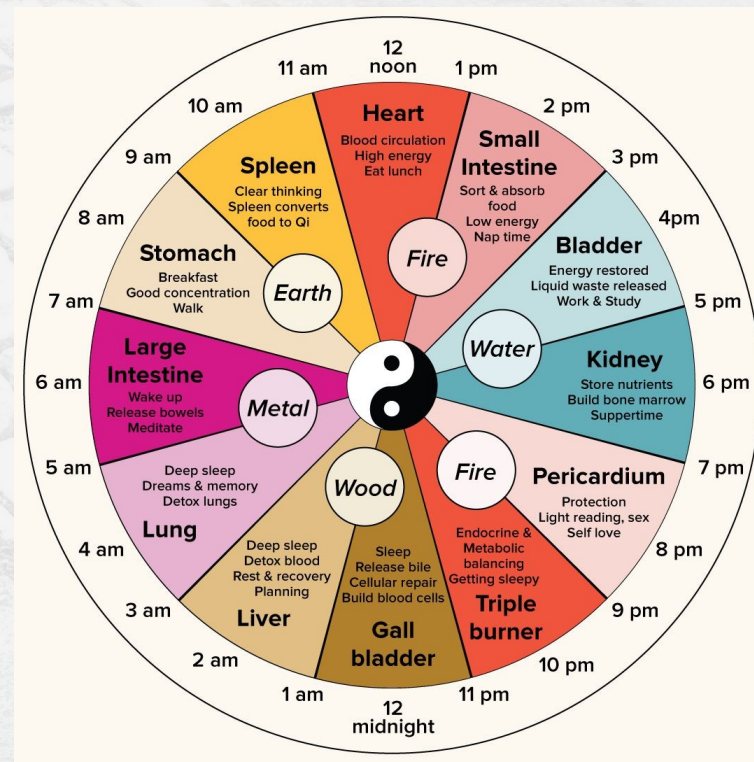
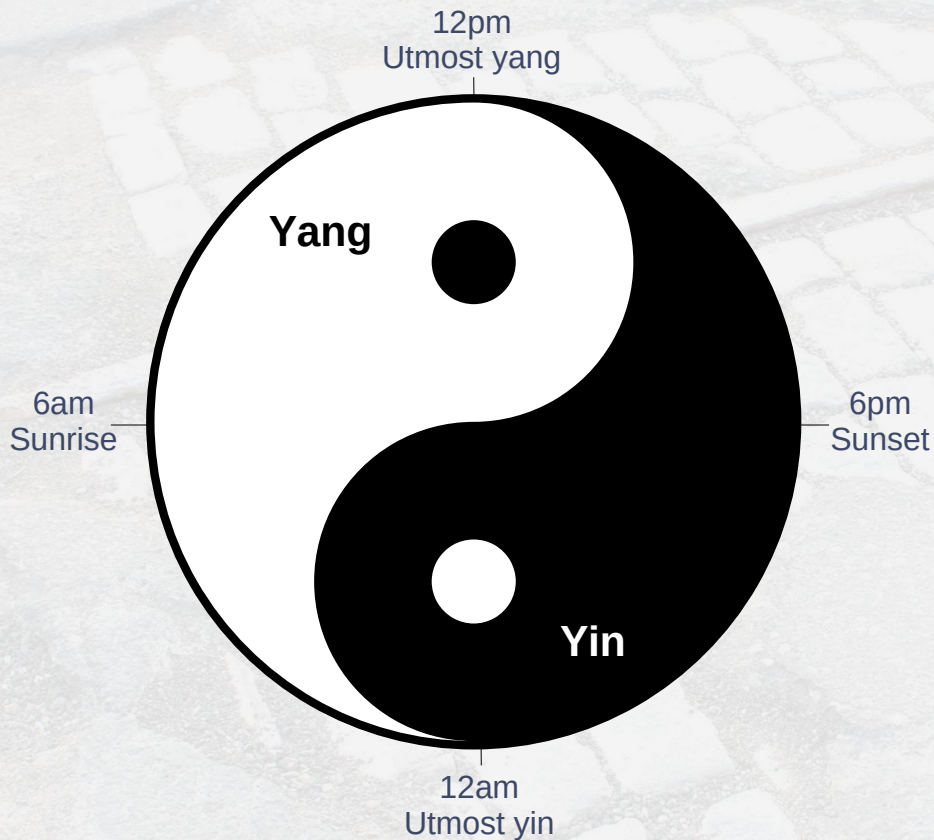


Square red dot straight line CC-BY-NC-SA David Ing 2024)

Sine Waves Blue and Brown CC-BY-NC-SA David Ing 2024



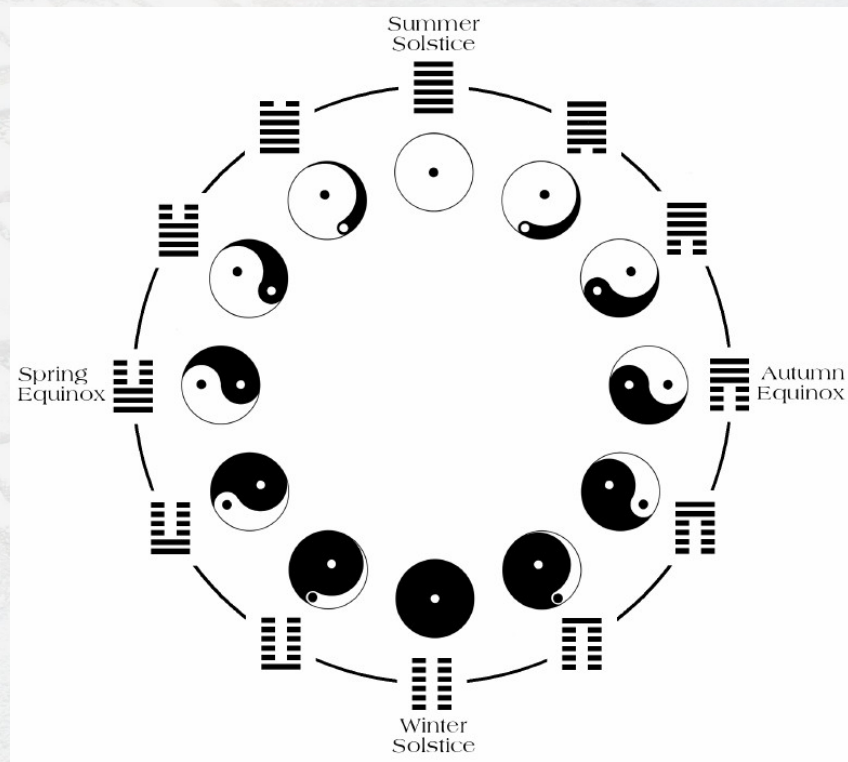
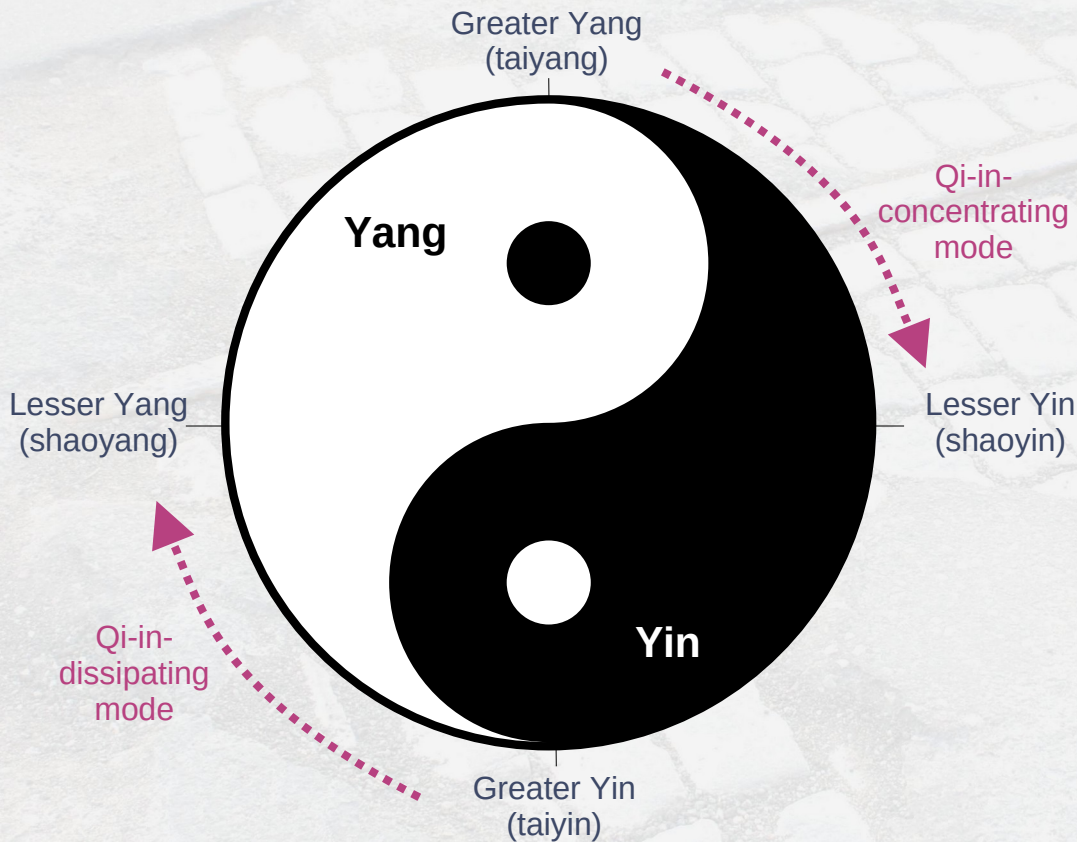
# Yang and yin correspond to processes of change of brightening and darkening, complicated by extension to more phases



"All About the Chinese Body Clock", Healthline (2020) at <https://www.healthline.com/health/chinese-body-clock>

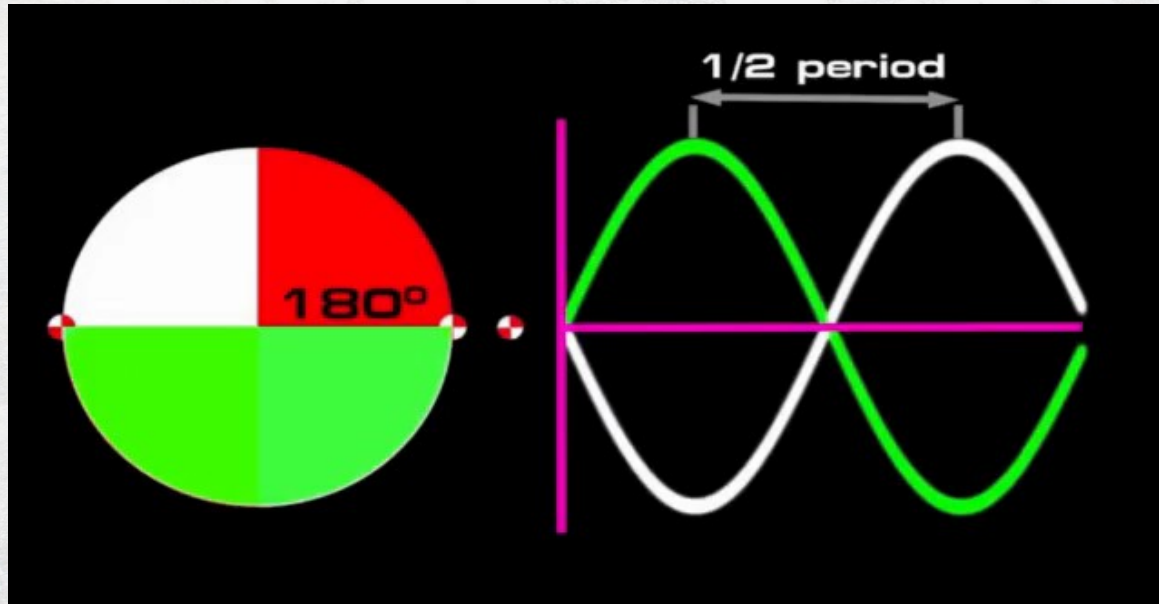


Qi as “atmosphere” is both matter and not-matter, waxing with qi-in-dissipating mode; and waning with qi-in-concentrating mode



Dr Andreas Schöter (2011)  
“Waxing and Waning – Yin and Yang Throughout the Year”

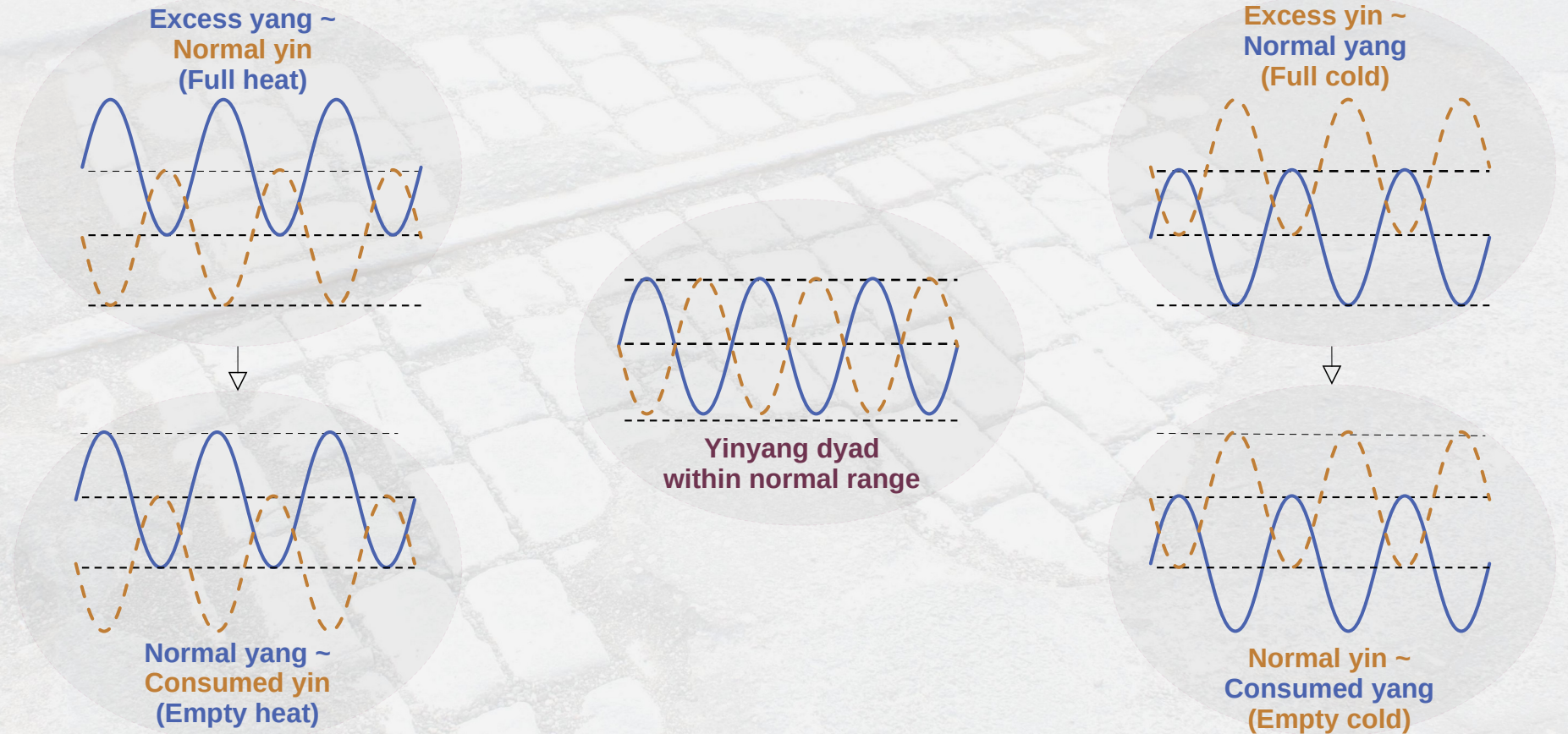
Dyadic processes of dissipating (to greater yang) and concentrating (to greater yin) are complementary in diachrony within (implicit) contexts



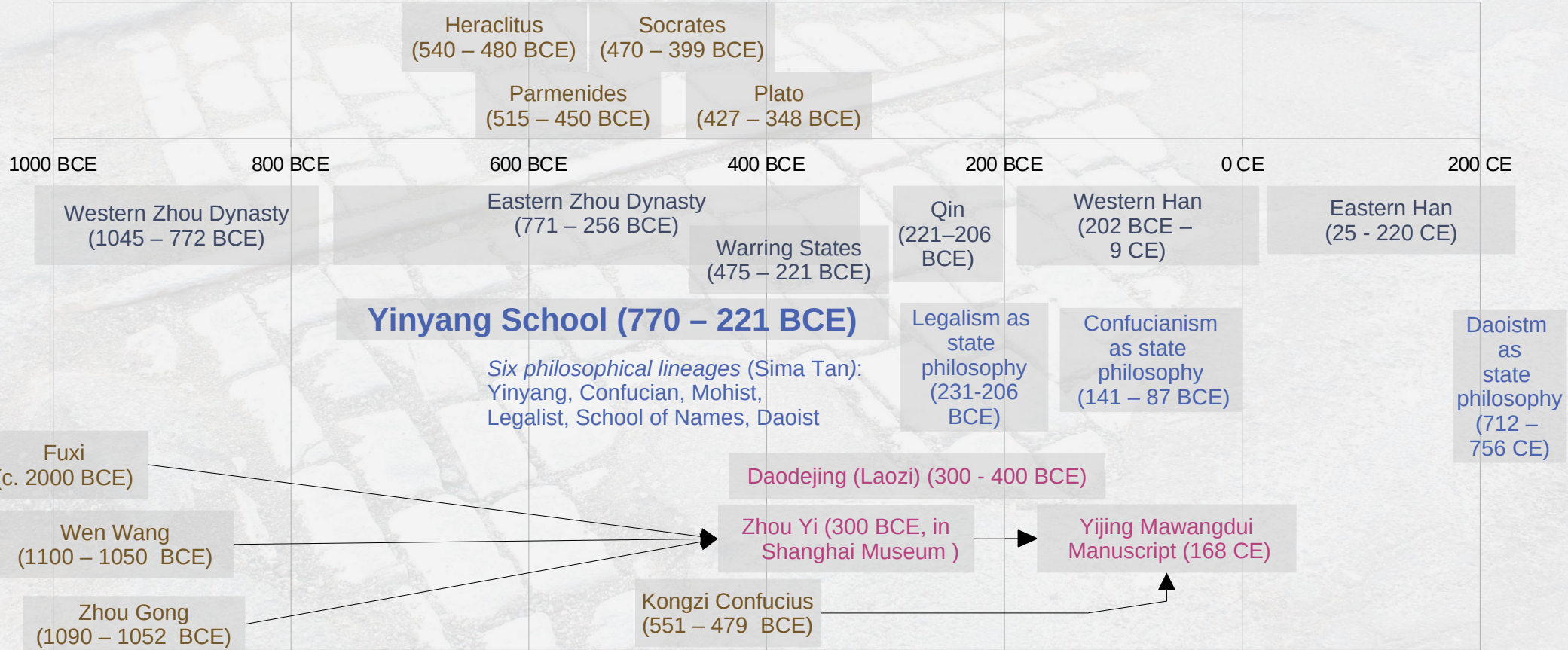
<i>Yang</i>	<i>Yin</i>
illuminating	Darkening
Working	Resting
Warming	Cooling
Rising	Descending
Dissipating	Materializing
Scattering	Congeaing
Generating	Growing
Expanding	Contracting



# Pathologies, where yin and yang are not in diachrony, may be diagnosed as one of four conditions (that change during the day)

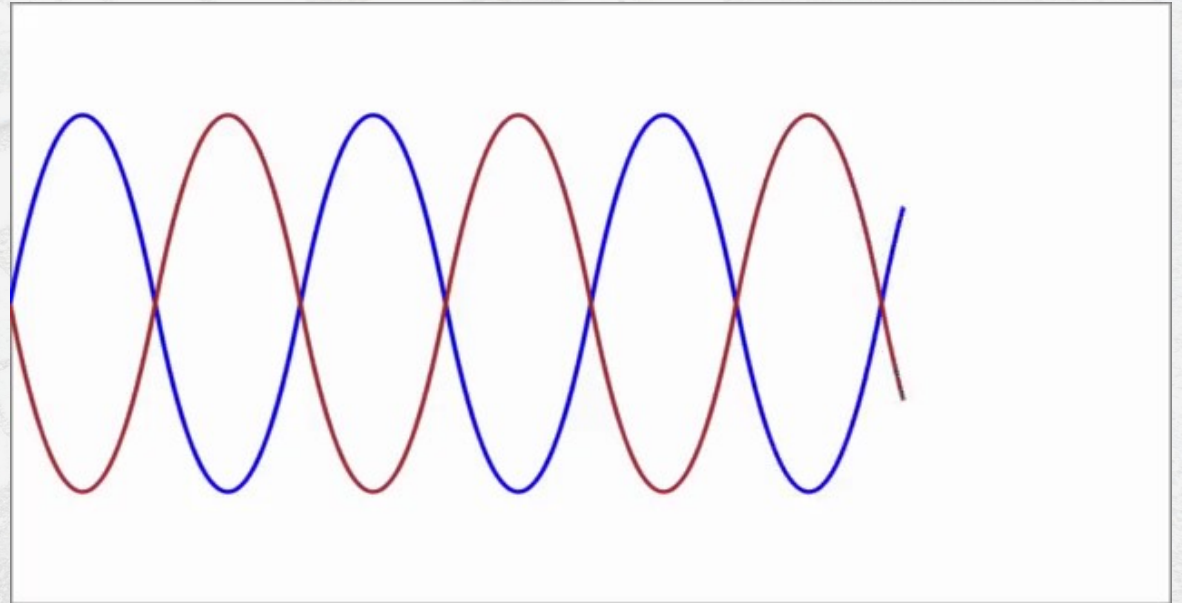
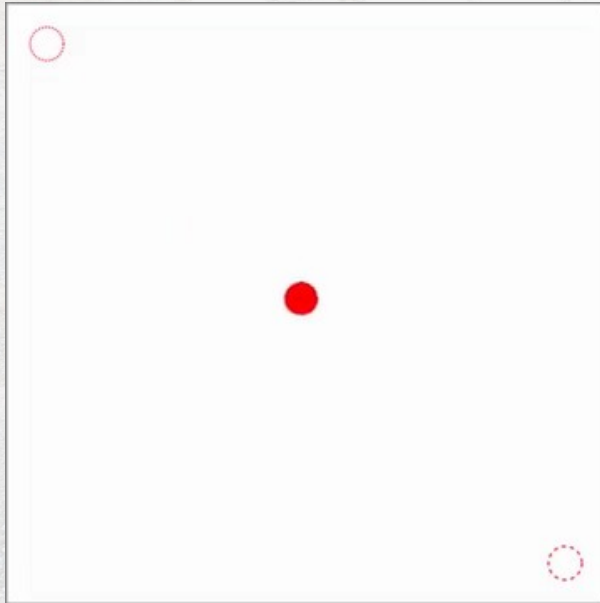


# Daojia was named ex-post c. 110 BCE, with Yinyang School as the first of six, predating standardized writing from Qin 221 BCE





What are the challenges to ↓ straight lining (point-to-point)  
↑ dyadic rhythming (waning-waxing, dissipating-concentrating)?



Square red dot straight line CC-BY-NC-SA David Ing 2024)

Sine Waves Blue and Brown CC-BY-NC-SA David Ing 2024

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# Organicism frames a world as parts-with-parts into wholes;



BMW Z4 GT3 - Car Assembly HD Time Lapse  
by TeamWestCoatRacing (2010)

# Organicism frames a world as parts-with-parts into wholes; contextualism knits threads-alongside-threads into textures

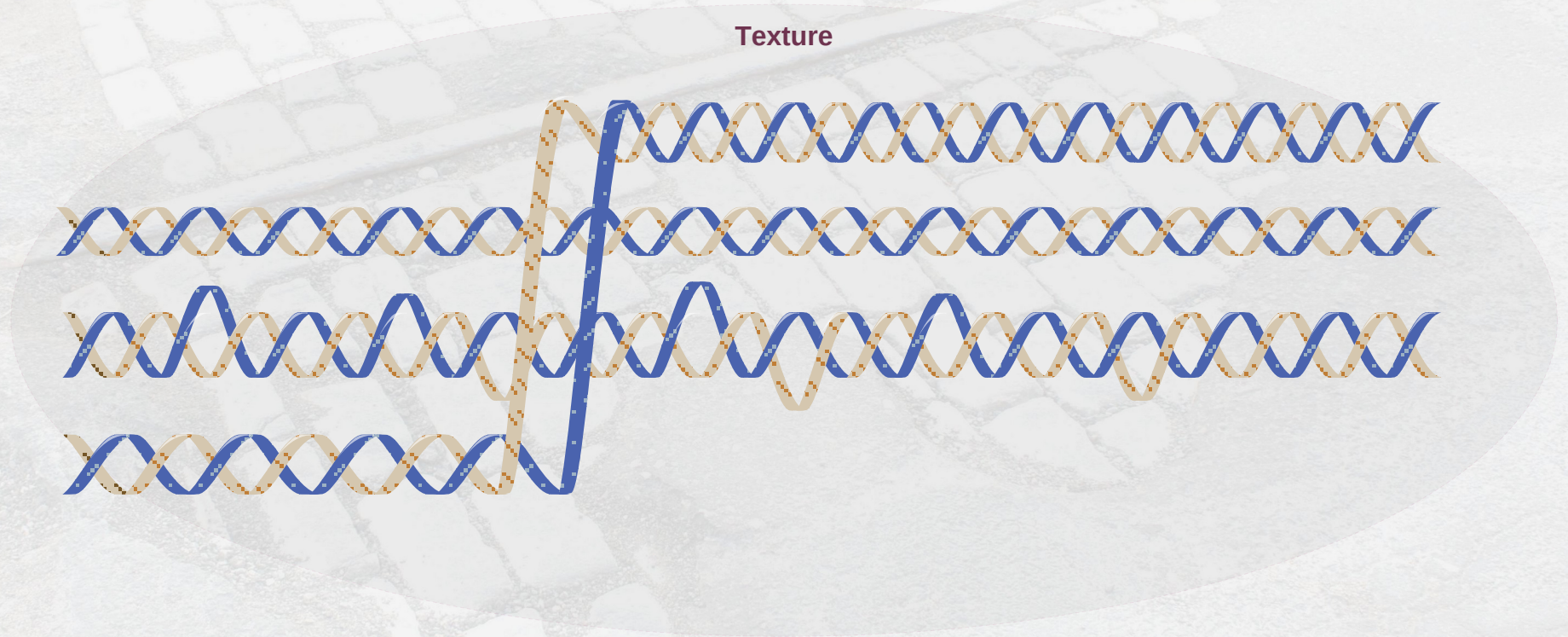


BMW Z4 GT3 - Car Assembly HD Time Lapse  
by TeamWestCoatRacing (2010)

Friday Night Swing @ MUB 2017-02-03 CC-BY Gainesville Swing (2017)



Yinyang threads (or strands), alongside other threads over time, may weave into a texture, counter to organicist part-whole thinking



# Living systems transforming often focus development on unity;



Butterfly Metamorphosis  
CC-BY Video Relaxation & Education (2021)



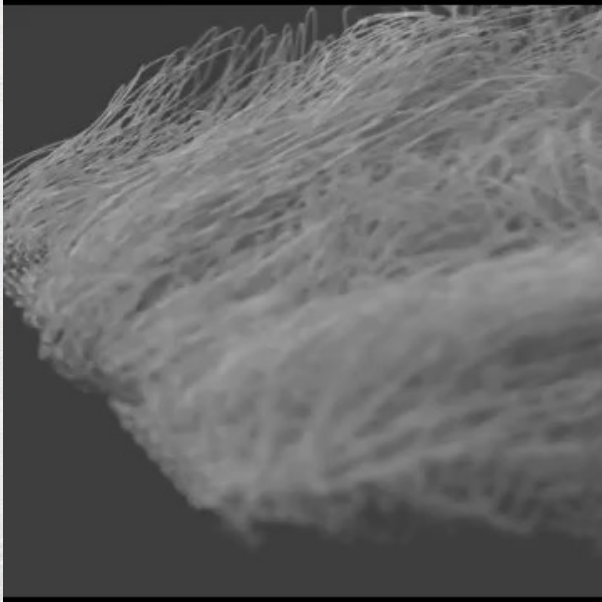
# Living systems transforming often focus development on unity; an ecological perspective sees threads co-respond with threads



Butterfly Metamorphosis  
CC-BY Video Relaxation & Education (2021)

Dolphins Swimming Captured by Underwater Camera, NOAA via Reuters, 2021

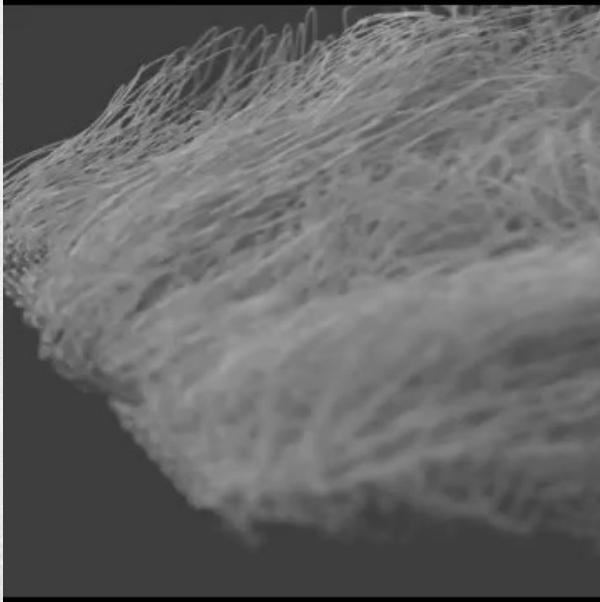
# Textures connote threads in weaves with others over time;



Blender Knitting Test  
by Albin Merle (2017)



Textures connote threads in weaves with others over time;  
dyadic textures may be appreciated in seasons changing



Blender Knitting Test  
by Albin Merle (2017)

Four Seasons Time Lapse Rocky Mountains CC-BY Negative4 (2015)

D. Dialogue Two ...

What are the challenges to ↓ building up parts-with-parts into wholes, ↑ knitting threads-alongside-threads into textures?



BMW Z4 GT3 - Car Assembly HD Time Lapse  
by TeamWestCoatRacing (2010)

Friday Night Swing @ MUB 2017-02-03 CC-BY Gainesville Swing (2017)



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D.↓ Subjective Initiative; ↑ Situational Potential ... (page 1 of 6)

Ancient Greeks → decisions towards controlling outcomes with action;



Rank Vlog Working Cattle CC-BU Brown Ranch (2020)



D.↓ Subjective Initiative; ↑ Situational Potential ... (page 2 of 6)

Ancient Greeks → decisions towards controlling outcomes with action;  
Classical Chinese → situational timing as favourable / unfavourable



Rank Vlog Working Cattle CC-BU Brown Ranch (2020)



How to Catch Trout with a Drop Shot by E Park Fishing (2020)

D.↓ Subjective Initiative; ↑ Situational Potential ... (page 3 of 6)

# Aristotle considered causes and effects, with plans and action;

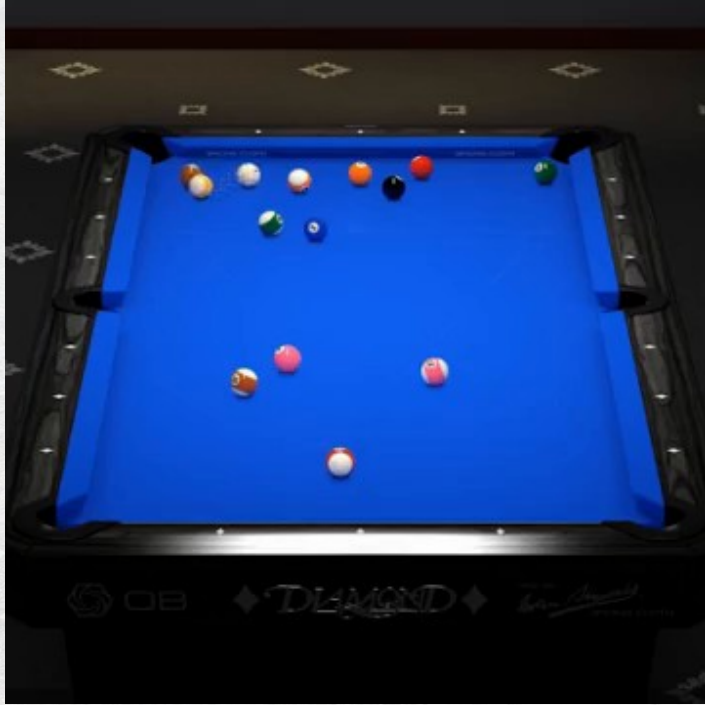


Shooter's Pool, Gameplay (Part 2) by MegaMilez (2020)



D.↓ Subjective Initiative; ↑ Situational Potential ... (page 4 of 6)

Aristotle considered causes and effects, with plans and action;  
Sunzi (Sun Tzu) looked for conditions with yinyang shifting



Shooter's Pool, Gameplay (Part 2) by MegaMilez (2020)



Feet Walking Along the Water Slow Motion CC-BY What's Going On (2020)

D.↓ Subjective Initiative; ↑ Situational Potential ... (page 5 of 6)

# Western causality directs yǒuwèi (willful action) with force;



Flooding Sandbagging Along Cedar River by  
Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier (2016)



D.↓ Subjective Initiative; ↑ Situational Potential ... (page 6 of 6)

Western causality directs yǒuwèi (willful action) with force;  
Chinese efficacy prefers wúwèi (non-intrusive action) via propensity



Flooding Sandbagging Along Cedar River by  
Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier (2016)



Beavers Behaving Badly by BBC Natural World (2014)

# What are the challenges to ↓ subjective initiative, ↑ situational potential?



Rank Vlog Working Cattle CC-BU Brown Ranch (2020)



How to Catch Trout with a Drop Shot by E Park Fishing (2020)



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■ Research Paper

# Rethinking Systems Thinking: Learning and Coevolving with the World

David Ing\*

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Much of systems thinking, as commonly espoused today, was developed by a generation in the context of the 1950s–1980s. In the 2010s, has systems thinking changed with the world in which it is to be applied? Is systems thinking *learning* and *coevolving* with the world? Some contemporary systems thinkers continue to push the frontiers of theory, methods and practice. Others situationally increment the traditions of their preferred gurus, where approaches proven successful in prior experiences are replicated for new circumstances. Founded on interactions with a variety of systems communities over the past 15 years, three ways to rethink systems thinking are proposed:

1. ‘parts and wholes’ snapshots → ‘learning and coevolving’ over time
2. social and ecological → emerged environments of the service economy and the Anthropocene
3. episteme and techné → phronesis for the living and nonliving

These proposed ways are neither exhaustive nor sufficient. The degree to which systems thinking should be rethought may itself be controversial. If, however, systems thinking is to be authentic, the changed world of the 21st century should lead systems thinkers to engage in a reflective inquiry. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

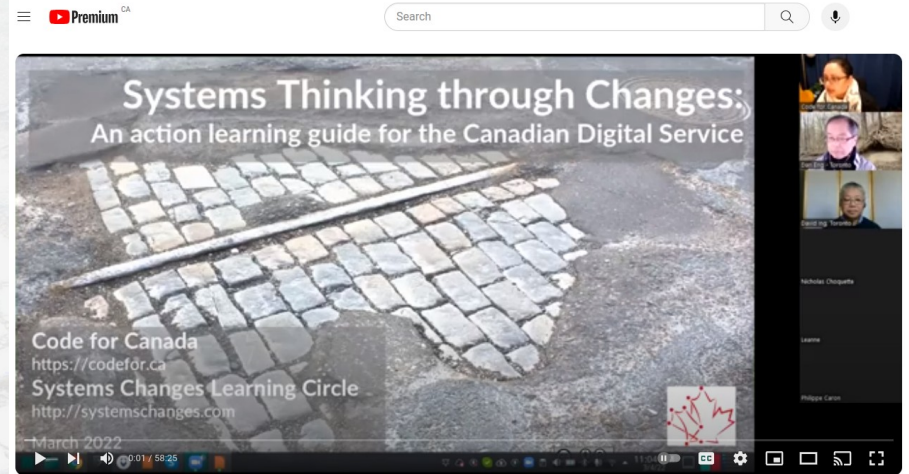
**Keywords** systems thinking; learning; coevolution; world

**INTRODUCTION: IS SYSTEMS THINKING LEARNING AND COEVOLVING WITH THE WORLD?**

The rise of systems thinking can be correlated with the founding of the Society for General Systems Research—the precursor for today’s

International Society for the Systems Sciences—in 1956. Much of conventional wisdom about systems thinking was influenced by luminaries between the 1950s and 1980s. Prominent names include presidents of the ISSS between 1971 and 1999: Stafford Beer, Margaret Mead, James Grier Miller, Gordon Pask, Kjell Samuelson, Heinz von Foerster, Sir Geoffrey Vickers, Richard F. Ericson, Brian R. Gaines, Robert Rosen, George Klir, John N. Warfield, Karl Deutsch, Bela H. Banathy, John A. Dillon, Peter B. Checkland,

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Systems Thinking through Changes: An action learning guide | Canadian Digital Service | 2022-03-04

## Agenda

~60m	~60m	~80m	~10m	~90m
<b>A. Presentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• <i>Systems Thinking as Systems Changes Learning</i></li> <li>• Action learning practices as a hub + 4 spokes</li> </ul>	 <b>B. Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reforming into groups ~10m</li> <li>• Knowing from within ~20m</li> <li>• Contextual influences ~20m</li> <li>• Diagnosing rhythmic disorders ~30m</li> </ul>		 <b>C. Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prognosing likelihoods ~20m</li> <li>• Reordering pacing ~20m</li> <li>• Reflecting on progress + process (for retrospective) ~20m</li> <li>• Read-outs ~30m</li> </ul>	
<b>D. Post-workshop retrospective (homework)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary (1 page) of paths considered and not taken, actions to be negotiated</li> </ul>				

Source: Code for Canada and Systems Changes Learning Circle. 2022. "Systems Thinking through Changes." Web video presented at the Canadian Digital Service, Toronto, Canada, March 4. [https://systemschanges.com/online/presentations/20220304\\_cfc](https://systemschanges.com/online/presentations/20220304_cfc).





## Systems Changes Learning: Recasting and Reifying Rhythmic Shifts for Doing, Alongside Thinking and Making

David Ing

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### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

Entering 2023, the Systems Changes Learning Circle completed in its fourth year of 10-year journey on "Rethinking Systems Thinking". In a contextual action learning approach, the Circle has elevated rhythmic shifts as the feature that both resonates with practitioners in the field, and fits with a post-colonial philosophy of science bridging classical Chinese thought with Western professional practices. This multiparadigm inquiry recasts and reifies the activities of doing (praxis), thinking (theoria) and making (poiesis). The facility with this approach is deepened through three levels: (i) educating of attention, orienting novices towards contrasting modes of thought; (ii) learning for co-relating, lending a way for practitioners to critically appreciate their situations, and (iii) learning for articulating, aiding mentors to guide groups productively through mutual learning style.

**Keywords:** systems thinking; systems change; polyrhythmia; ecological epistemology; yinyang; propensity; Chinese medicine; post-colonial science; action learning


### 1. Introduction

The *Systems Changes Learning Circle* was formed in January 2019, centered in Toronto, Canada. At inception, a rising interest in a label of "systems

<sup>1</sup> Peer editing and final proofreading for this article by Thomas Marlowe of Seton Hall University.

### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Appreciating systems changes via multiparadigm inquiry: Architectural design, ecological anthropology, Classical Chinese Medicine and systems rhythms

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### Abstract

In which ways is the subject of *systems change(s)*, as a first-class concept, distinct from a reduction into (i) systems and (ii) changes? For practice, theory and methods to be authentically rigorous, the philosophy underlying an approach to systems changes can be explicated. Through an appreciative systems framework, presumptions are surfaced as to (i) what are and are not systems changes; (ii) when, where and for whom, systems changes are prioritized for attention; and (iii) how systems changes should be addressed. Philosophies of (i) architectural design, (ii) ecological anthropology, (iii) Classical Chinese Medicine and (iv) rhythms are explored through multiparadigm inquiry and open theorizing. The resulting influence of these four philosophies is considered, leading to a philosophy of systems rhythms more explicitly proposed as a foundation on which to approach systems changes.

### KEYWORDS

appreciative systems, multiparadigm inquiry, systems changes, systems rhythms

### 1 | INTRODUCTION

A rising interest in system(s) change(s), if authentic, could signal a corresponding exploration of the arts and sciences of systems. The distinction between approaches considered 'system(s) change(s)' and those 'not system(s) change(s)' is uneven from descriptions and reports of activities in recent years.

- *Systems change*, as described by Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, points out governments using systems approaches in public services (Cook & Tönurist, 2017, p. 4).
- *Systems change*, as led by Forum for the Future at Wasan Island in 2018, chose to not converge on an agreed definition, instead focusing on field building (Birney & Riddell, 2018, p. 5).

- *System change*, for Stanford University scholars, is a way for 'policymakers, foundations, NGOs, and social enterprises tackling issues like poverty, preventable disease and poor education' (Seelos & Mair, 2018, p. 35).
- *System change*, in a guidebook from the United Nations Development Programme in 2022, prescribes a three phase methodology: (1) sense and frame, (2) engage and position and (3) transform (Wellsch, 2022, p. 1).

A scrupulous view of these descriptions notices change as a singular event, rather than an ongoing process. These would be consistent with the unfreezing → moving → refreezing three steps ascribed to, but in fact a post hoc reconstruction of work by, Kurt Lewin (Cummings et al., 2016). In addition, scholars immersed in systems thinking are careful in using *systems* in the

## REFRAMING SYSTEMS THINKING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGES: SCIENCING AND PHILOSOPHIZING FROM PRAGMATISM TOWARDS PROCESSES AS RHYTHMS

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### Abstract

Systems thinking rose in 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial society largely from post-WWII research. Psychologists Eric L. Trist and Fred E. Emery were early in human relations, later turning towards sociology. Philosophers C. West Churchman and Russell L. Ackoff were cofounders of Operations Research, applying pragmatism to problem-solving of complex issues. The texture of Socio-Technical Systems (STS) and Socio-Ecological Systems (SES) perspectives interweaves with management science and inquiring systems.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Service Economy and Ecological Anthropocene followed advancement of the Internet and globalization through the 1990s. Resurfacing Trist-Emery and Churchman-Ackoff for a new generation not only revisits their sciencing, but also philosophizing.

Trist-Emery Socio-Psychological Systems (SPS) and STS perspectives extended the structuralist psychology of Gestalt, through Andras Angyal and Kurt Lewin. The SES perspective built on the pragmatist metaphysics of Stephen C. Pepper. Sciencing by Churchman-Ackoff encouraged Operations Research beyond mathematics towards collaborative decision-making. Postwar applied philosophizing built on the experimentalism of Edgar A. Singer Jr. This lineage traces from the Metaphysical Club circa 1890, through the 1980s.

Philosophizing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century provides new lenses for the systems sciences. Through ecological anthropology, Tim Ingold depicts the lives of lines, and texture in weaving. Through Classical Chinese Medicine, Keekok Lee distinguishes *yin qi* and *yang qi*. In post-colonial constructionist program of *Rethinking Systems Thinking*, principal concepts of (i) rhythm, (ii) texture, and (iii) propensity have become the core of *Systems Changes Learning* practices, theory, and methods.

A new world hypothesis of (con)textural-dyadicism is proposed, combining STS and SES features. The associated systems theory foregrounds time-space changes over the defining of space-time systems and boundaries. Philosophizing across Western and Classical Chinese traditions requires deeper inquiry and education.

### Keywords

Systems change, philosophy of science, pragmatism, Chinese philosophy, socio-technical, socio-ecological

### 1 | Introduction: Sciencing systems from post-WWII into the 2020s sweeps in philosophizing

In the development of systems thinking from the 1950s through the 1990s, strands of an emerging science of systems coevolved with underlying philosophies of science. Collaborations spanned Anglo-American partnerships. In the American branch, C. West Churchman and Russell L. Ackoff led from philosophy into science. In the UK branch, via the Tavistock Institute, Eric L. Trist and Fred E. Emery led from the psychological and sociological sciences, towards philosophy. Collectively, the network was largely influenced by American Pragmatism dating back to the 1890s, extending those traditions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Milestones in the development of systems thinking in the 1960s-1990s are reflected in published legacies. From 1969, an early expression of the Trist-Emery trajectory is collected in the foundational *Systems Thinking: Selected Readings* (Emery, 1969b, 1981). Through the 1990s, reflections of the Trist-Emery journey were collected into 3-volume *Tavistock Anthology* (Trist & Murray, 1990; Trist et al., 1993, 1997). Following the 1947 supervision by Churchman of Ackoff's doctoral dissertation, the coauthoring of *Methods of Inquiry: An Introduction to Philosophy and Scientific Method* (Churchman & Ackoff, 1950) serves as a commencement for later collective and individual works. Festschrifts by colleagues and former students honoured C. West

## Rethinking Work, with the Pandemic Disruption: Metatheorizing with World Hypotheses and Systems Changes

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Susu Nousala, [s.nousala@csrcp.institute](mailto:s.nousala@csrcp.institute)  
Creative Systemic Research Platform Institute, Ticino, Switzerland;

### Abstract

**Purpose** – The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic in the years put a pause on the everyday lives of workers and normal operation of organizations. As economies have reopened, resumption of pre-pandemic normalcy has not been uniform. The shocks to economies and societies has been historic, with prospects for recovery varied. For each worker and leader, an essential question is whether the world of work has changed irreversibly, or if prior careers and business models can be resumed. A philosophical inquiry into world theories, and theories of the world of work, provides a framing that separates everyday changes from systems changes.

**Approach** – A metatheoretical approach to world theories described by Stephen C. Pepper in 1942 is revisited. Attention is drawn to systems of knowledge along the dimensions of analytic-deductive treatments, and dispersive-integrative treatments. Of the four relatively adequate world hypotheses, two are reconnected to the research originating from Fred E. Emery and Eric L. Trist.: Socio-Technical Systems (STS) perspective to Organicism, and Socio-Ecological Systems perspective to Contextualism. Reworking a processual philosophy towards polyrhythmia, contextual-dyadic thinking is proposed as an alternative World Hypothesis. A root metaphor of tidescapewindscapе portrays the pandemic disruption with a metaphorical winter as an external pathogenic factor, impacting multiple systems of interest, including family life and enterprise operations. As a metaphorical spring emerges comes for some, the interwoven contexture and dyads may resolve with a new eurhythmia or persist with unresolved pathologies.

**Findings** – A (con)textural-dyadic reframing of the world of work effectively reworks causal texture theory emphasizing living systems with (i) rhythmic pacing; (ii) dyadic balancing, and (iii) transformative reifying. Through this new world hypothesis, new insights into the effects with the onset and passing of the pandemic disruption are gained.

**Research limitations/implications** – Updating systems theories of socio-technical and socio-ecological perspectives invokes a post-colonial constructivist philosophy that appreciates roots in American pragmatism, ecological anthropology, and Chinese philosophy of science. The emphasis of systems rhythms prioritizes a processual orientation, compatible with a yinyang material-immaterial onto-epistemology.



# Centered in Toronto, the Systems Changes Learning Circle originates from CSI, OCADU SFI and Systems Thinking Ontario



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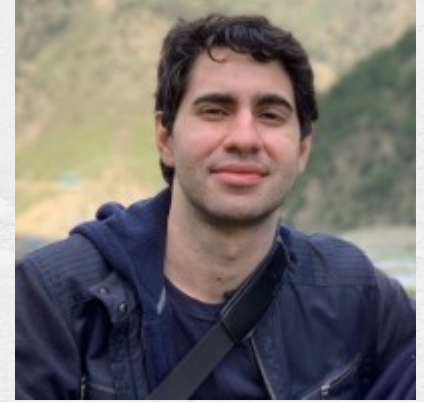
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# Creative Systemic Research Platform Institute

is an institution aiming to promote research and development of non-profit projects. We focus on investigating the skills needed for Community Resilience, supported by ecological practices and systemic and creative learning.

Existing since 2017 as a non-profit research group, we evolved in December 2020 into the CSRP Institute.

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